

JEWELRY

## Tag Heuer vies for attention of millions as China launches Mars mission

August 25, 2016



*Video still courtesy of Tag Heuer*

By JEN KING

Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer is putting its "Don't crack under pressure" mantra to good use as it prepares to be the first luxury brand to market from Mars.

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LVMH-owned Tag Heuer has aligned with China's Mars Exploration Program, which intends to land an unmanned rover on the Red Planet in 2020. In its supporting role of the China National Space Administration's Mars expedition, Tag Heuer will serve as timekeeper, a position likely to keep its band top of mind among Chinese consumers drawn to the monumental occasion.

"[Tag Heuer's involvement personifies its mantra] to dare, push boundaries and break rules," said Jean-Claude Biver, CEO of **Tag Heuer** and president of LVMH Watch Division.

"To respect and continue our tradition," he said. "No Tradition, no future. No innovation, no future."

Is there life on Mars?

**Tag Heuer** is no stranger to space exploration and counts itself as the first Swiss watchmaker to be "out of this world." In 1962, United States astronaut John Glenn sported a Tag Heuer stopwatch during the first manned U.S. orbital flight in his Mercury capsule, "Friendship 7."

During the orbital flight, Mr. Glenn exclaimed, "The clock is running!" thus cementing Tag Heuer into the history of space exploration. Tag Heuer's involvement has served as a testament to its quality and demonstrates that its timepieces and Swiss horological know-how "[does not] crack under pressure," whether that be in space, air, land or water.

Watchmakers pride themselves on mechanical accuracy, and having proof that its watches can stand up to the elements of space travel has provided Tag Heuer leverage to continue its exploration with China's Mars Exploration Program.



*Tag Heuer ad for the Chinese market*

After a successful space program that began during the Space Race of the late 1950s and early 1960s, China announced it would be launching a mission to Mars. On April 22, 2016, Xu Dazhe, head of the CNSA, confirmed that the Mars mission would send an unmanned probe to Mars in 2020 to conduct research on the planet's soil, environment and atmosphere.

On Aug. 23, Tag Heuer announced its support of the CNSA's Mars mission during a press conference in Beijing. During the announcement Tag Heuer CEO and LVMH Watch Division president Jean-Claude Biver was joined by Jizhong Liu, the director of lunar exploration and space engineering center under the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense, and Rongqiao Zhang, the chief designer of the Mars Exploration Mission.



*Project leaders from CNSA & Jean-Claude Biver, CEO of TAG Heuer and LVMH Watch Division president*

While the press conference was held Tag Heuer expressed its support of the mission to Mars as well as joined in on the unveiling of the program logo design and the exterior design of China's long-awaited and first Mars rover.

Tag Heuer also shared its excitement for China's Mars Exploration Program with its social media community through a space exploration-themed video. The minute-long video begins with a time lapse video of the galaxy passing over a range of mountains while overlaid text reads, "Space, vast and limitless time, flow with no end. Infinite time and space."

The film continues to show a rocket's countdown, initial takeoff and a computer generated view of space, while copy tells the viewer the history of Tag Heuer and space exploration.

In following scenes, Tag Heuer breaks the news of its relationship with the CNSA. Clips show a rendering of the rover departing from the main rocket, CNSA engineers working on the Mars rover and a Tag Heuer watchmaker examining a mechanism.

At the video's conclusion, Tag Heuer shares that "millions of Chinese [will] witness the glorious moment" with its brand before its #DontCrackUnderPressure hashtag appears on the Red Planet.

### *Tag Heuer / China's Mars Exploration Program*

The final frontier

Luxury has set up shop on all continents, and even has a presence in Antarctica now that high-end cruises and travel agencies are facilitating trips to the remote destination that for centuries was limited to scientific explorers.

The only other option left is to go upward. For Swiss watchmaker Omega this has already been achieved, when in 1969, NASA astronaut Buzz Aldrin wore an Omega Speedmaster Professional chronograph on the outside of his spacesuit. The Speedmaster Professional Apollo 11 45th Anniversary timepiece, released in 2014, marked this occasion as well as the watchmaker's link to one of mankind's most miraculous achievements ([see story](#)).

Consumer-facing efforts of space exploration are only now coming to fruition.

In 2014, Jaguar Land Rover drummed up excitement for its then just released Discovery Sport model by giving fans a chance to head into outer space with friends through a partnership with spaceflight company Virgin Galactic.

The Galactic Discovery contest called for consumers to send in videos that demonstrated a spirit of adventure. One winner was then given the opportunity to be sent with three friends up into space ([see story](#)).

"[Tag Heuer] is not the only watch to go into space, but it is pre-empting others by jumping on this relationship," said Rob Frankel, branding strategist & expert at [Frankel & Anderson](#), Los Angeles.

"Interesting to see if there's a backlash in the United States over [Tag Heuer] trumpeting a Chinese effort rather than an American one," he said.

"The Chinese love anything Western, especially American. The only reason why Buick survived as an American brand is because they have enormous sales in China. Do the math: Chinese national pride in their space program plus Western luxury item equals profits."

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